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*Mr. Chas. Schäffer*

AMONG THE SOURCES OF THE SASKATCHE-  
WAN AND ATHABASCA RIVERS.

MARY T. S. SCHÄFFER.

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## AMONG THE SOURCES OF THE SASKATCHEWAN AND ATHABASCA RIVERS.

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MARY T. S. SCHÄFFER.

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The primary reason for writing this paper is, that it may bear its quota of usefulness to any who may be inclined to visit the section described. As to the location of the ground covered, from a glance at Dr. J. Norman Collie's map which accompanies his book—"Climbs and Explorations in the Canadian Rockies," it will be found to be bounded by latitudes 51' 25" to 52' 25", and longitudes 116' to 118'. This is of course a rough outline, but it contains all the tributaries of those two great rivers of the north, which we visited. Our greatest trouble in the spring of 1907, was to obtain information which would be of even the smallest use in pointing out the way over such almost undescribed ground.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Collie's book has summed up the work of himself and his friends, with that of previous workers in the same field, *i. e.*, the section lying between Laggan and Wilcox Pass; the Fortress Lake region and the Brazeau country belong to Dr. Coleman. As for the Yellow-head Pass, it is a matter of rather ancient history, having been described as far back as the days of Alexander Henry, an employee of the Northwest Fur Trading Co., who has left us an interesting diary, which covers the years between 1799 and 1814. The old history of the pass was of small practical use to us however, as it was the intervening valleys between this pass and the Kicking Horse Pass (that which the Canadian Pacific uses to-day), which we wished to explore.

<sup>1</sup> In spite of a general knowledge of the subject, we were unable to get at the material, and not until after our return to civilization, were we fortunate enough to obtain literature and maps which would have been so valuable to us in the far wilderness. One who goes hence should carry Dr. Collie's map. This is easy to obtain, being published with his "Climbs and Explorations"; Outram's map which accompanies his work—"In the Heart of the Canadian Rockies," may be of equal value; Dr. A. P. Coleman's articles published in the *Royal Geographical Journals*, are of great use; and James McEvoy's report on the Government Geological Survey of that section is a most interesting pamphlet to have. From these few sources is to be culled all the practical information that can be found on the country.

To know that the expedition was a momentous one to those involved in its success, one has but to read the warnings of those who have gone before. We may well call it the "Inhospitable Land." A well-known hunting-country, many have gone into its fastnesses, only to be driven out by starvation, and the added sorrow of lost, starved, or drowned horses. Dr. Collie but voices that which may be read between the lines of all those who have written their experiences in this country. He says: "Jean Habel's outfit, like so many others, ran short of provisions and the expedition had to be curtailed; and much good work of exploration, which might otherwise have been accomplished, was thereby prevented. Some day perhaps, it will be possible to obtain an outfit manned and equipped with sufficient transport and provisions to last out a trip of three or four months. At present nobody seems to have mastered the problem; and the prospect of running short of food on the journey remains the most serious obstacle to all projects of extended exploration among the mountains."

That we would be tempted to dally day by day, we well knew, that the game was becoming, year by year, more scarce, previous trips and the hard experience of others had warned us; and the food problem became a very simple matter in arithmetic. As we had hopes of reaching most of the tributaries of the two rivers within the latitudes and longitudes given previously we reckoned food and clothing for four months. The season of 1907 was an uncommonly late one, and it was not till June 20, that we were able to leave all civilization behind and start for the higher passes. The morning of the twentieth, was anything but a typical June day, and the first twenty miles of the Bow trail were not what one might choose for a pleasure jaunt. It was spitting hail and snow, which struck not only our faces but deep into our souls; for those who had not the spirit of the wilds surging in their hearts, had prognosticated all sorts of mishaps, and if one were looking for "signs," they were about us in profusion. Our caravan consisted of eleven horses, one running light, that in case of chafed back or accident, there would be an extra one to use. This will seem an extravagance to many, but it proved to be one of the best investments in the entire outfit, as the appearance of our animals showed on our return to civilization, not a horse being out of commission, and every one of them capable of working four months longer.

The Bow trail to the summit of the pass, is at the present time, rather a discouraging proposition, but there is one satisfaction, it is one of the poorest bits of trail that is to be experienced throughout the entire trip. It was of course at its very worst this late June day, for the mountains were still discharging their winter snows into the soaked and over-flowing valleys. Dr. Collie's map, compiled from the work done by himself, Wilcox, Coleman, Drewry and McArthur, Noyes and Thompson, was our constant companion in the saddle. It is necessarily far from perfect, distances here and there being too long or too short, but a very good friend to have at all times. Often when the trail was dim or obscured, or completely lost, have I thought of and admired the men, who with only an occasional suggestion that the Indian hunter had been before them, fought their way through the discouraging valleys, found a passage round impassable gorges, and eventually reached the higher peaks of the Rocky Range.

The upper Bow Lakes and Bow Pass were the first plunge into fine scenery. If one may go no further, this is a trip worth taking. At the summit, where the spruces remind one of a great natural park, a short detour to the left leads over easy slopes to the cliffs which overhang Peyto Lake, the waters of which are the outpourings of the Wapta neve. It is the first glimpse of the Saskatchewan country.

Here at our feet Bear Creek (on some maps Mistaya (Bear) but never locally so-called) has its rise, flows north, taps the beautiful lakes known as the Waterfowl, goes rippling, and gurgling, and dancing along in happy oblivion to the superb panorama on both shores—Howse Peak, the stately Pyramid, the frowning Bungalow, and lastly Murchison, losing its final identity in the turbid Saskatchewan at the base of that great, wandering, outspread, pile of crags—Mt. Wilson. The days on Bear Creek grew hotter and hotter. We hurried along as fast as our heavily loaded horses would permit, knowing that each hour was adding inches to that angry, impetuous river and anxious to reach the other side before we had to swim for it. At 4 p. m., on June 25, we had crossed Bear Creek at its mouth (no easy matter when the water is high, for the river-bed is covered with huge boulders) and faced the first serious proposition—crossing the Saskatchewan River. An excellent ford across the North Fork may be found about one mile

west of Bear Creek, and we were in the nick of time, twenty-four hours later would have meant swimming.

With minds at rest, we camped that night on a high bluff overlooking the North Fork; behind us rose the high walls of Mt. Wilson, while Murchison, Sarbach, Pyramid, and the Freshfields died away in rosy, then purpling shadows; night came down, and we realized at last our utter isolation. The door was closed for many days to come to other companionship and the situation was saved from a sense of loneliness only by our minds being devoted absolutely to the destruction of mosquitoes, an occupation which lasted for several weeks. From Bear Creek to Wilcox Pass the scenery is a succession of beautiful pictures. About ten miles from the summit of the pass, the trail leaves the shingle-flats of the river and mounts a long and arduous hill, eventually reaching a point about 1000 feet above the valley, where the timber being scarce, the views of the receding and on-coming peaks are wonderfully fine. About three miles below "Camp Parker" (an easily recognized camp-ground at the junction of Nigel Creek and the North Fork), the now fast-diminishing river makes a deep plunge, forming what we have called "Panther Falls." Soon after passing the falls, Mt. Athabasca comes into sight on the left; being 11,900 feet high, and snow-clad, it is a joy even to eyes now so used to mountains. From "Camp Parker" to the main pass is about five miles, but a canyon beyond it being said to make that way impracticable, the trail to the true pass on the right, is a little hard to find. There is an old and much used camp among the spruces on the high meadows, called "Camp Expectation." Reaching this, the forest is skirted for a quarter of a mile, when a pebbly river-bed is reached; this is followed up for a short distance when a good trail to the pass is struck. This hidden trail is well worth a search, any other route is a hard grind for the horses.

The pass itself is long, heavy, ugly travelling; if the day be cloudy, it could not be more uninteresting, but being 7800 feet high, there is a fine view of Mt. Athabasca to the southwest, while to the north is seen the group of mountains climbed and named by Dr. Collie and his party.

The first drop on the north side of the pass, is a long sharp hill, where a well-marked trail leads to "Sheep Camp," a name well-known to hunters. By this camp runs a beautiful stream head-



ing from Wilcox Pass, which we afterward named "Tangle Creek." Here the trail disappears as though it had dropped into the earth. It may help some future traveller to know that if he will cross this creek at the camp, bear well to the left in the forest, he will soon come upon a very good trail, which quickly leads to the Su Wapta in the valley below. Little Tangle Creek added quite a volume to the main river (an important branch of the Athabasca), and with its wide shingle-flats and guardian mountains on both sides, bore a strong resemblance to the Saskatchewan tributaries.

Unlike the Saskatchewan region, however, horse-feed here is limited and camp-grounds consequently scarce. The first possible stopping-place is at least two miles below the main Su Wapta canyon, and on the left side of the river. Even that is a very poor place, being but a small slough, with scarce feed enough for a dozen horses for one night. The next feeding place is found in the quick-sand belt, five to seven miles further down the river. This does not sound attractive for the horses, but unless it be early spring, there is little danger. This quick-sand is not a pleasing problem; it extends down the river at least three miles, and there being no way to go round, it must be traversed. Beyond it, and just north of the creek marked "Jonas" on the map, a large rock-slide of recent origin, gave us our next bit of study. It was soon navigated however by plowing through the muskeg on the west side of the river for at least four hundred yards, when we struck dry ground and a bit of a trail, and "going" was easy again. Beyond the rock-slide, Jonas Creek emptied its clear waters into the muddy Su Wapta, while a little further on, and flowing in a parallel direction, Pobokton Creek appeared from amidst the thick, green forest. Dr. Coleman, who named both creeks, told us later, that the names had been transposed on Collie's map, but for fear of still further misunderstanding—we let them alone. Beyond Pobokton (Owl) Creek, a long, rather low, rocky range marks the course of the main river for miles. For a day and a half we followed it in all its tiresomeness. Reaching the junction of the Su Wapta and the Athabasca, and seeing that it still continued in more or less broken form on down the Athabasca valley, we dubbed it "the Endless Chain."

The Athabasca at this junction, gave us no such impression of might and strength as the Saskatchewan at an equal distance from

its source, the great ice-fields of the Columbia and surrounding peaks evidently contributed much more largely to the southern river.

The Athabasca, at its source, is divided into three streams, and till they are reached at their junction, almost all scenic beauty is at a standstill. Not so the mosquitoes, deer-flies, bull-dogs, and caribou-flies; they were there by the millions to torment man and beast; but not even they could deter us from a desire to see Fortress Lake, discovered and named by Dr. Coleman in 1893, visited by Wilcox in 1896, and Habel in 1901.

In my diary I find this entry, "July 10, Indian Camp (our camps were all named to avoid confusion). The mosquitoes have shrieked and buzzed all night about our heads. If the number increases in direct ratio to the number of miles we go, at Fortress Lake we will be breathing and eating the pests." The words proved later to be almost a prophecy, though it was a matter of flies, not mosquitoes. While visiting the South or Columbia branch of the Athabasca, we were surrounded and overwhelmed, one evening at supper, by thousands of tiny flies, which though they did not bite, clung in clouds about us, drowned in our tea, became hopelessly entangled in the butter, died by hundreds in the apple-sauce, flew into ears, eyes, and nostrils, till we were distracted.

Having crossed the southeast branch of the Athabasca, we continued along the southwest branch, which Coleman has named the Chaba (beaver). Here we found a paradise for the horses, and made camp under the shadow of a noble crag, which proved later to be Fortress Mountain, and for which the lake was named. The lake being still an unknown quantity, the following day we made the ascent of a mountain (Mt. Quincy) opposite the Fortress and after a long, hot, weary scramble, Fortress Lake burst upon our sight, lying like an exquisite blue-green ribbon among the spruce-grown valleys below. It is about nine miles long, with an imposing mountain heavily covered with snow, rising at the far end. Habel has called it Mt. Blanc, while Wilcox seems to think it the long-lost Hooker.

Heavy thunder-showers prevented any photography worth mentioning, and we returned to camp to move our belongings to the shores of the lake. Beautiful as the lake in its exquisite setting is, it is no place for a permanent camp. The eastern end of the lake is a marsh, while the north and south shores are impenetrable





*This is  
my  
Edo III*

MT. COLUMBIA FROM THE NORTH.



CAMP AT NASHAN-ESEN LAKE AT THOMPSON PASS.

*Cushman calls it Watshynian's Peak  
He had called it Graham*

owing to the dense forests and undergrowth. A raft was the only practical solution for reaching the western terminus and main outlet of the lake, and that was out of the question for us, as we had nothing with us but our valuable lash-ropes. Consequently we contented ourselves with a trip on our horses to the end of the Chaba valley, which proved to be about five miles long. Two miles south of the lake a stream joins the Chaba from the southeast and seems longer than the Chaba. The end of the Chaba valley is blocked by two fine glacier-tongues heavily covered with debris; a huge avalanche, 30 or 40 feet thick, choked the narrow gorge one half mile from the extreme end, on our visit in 1907 (Habel mentions the same in 1901) while beautiful water-falls on our right fell hundreds of feet from the precipices looming far above our heads.

Beautiful as Fortress Lake and her surrounding crags were, we were glad to say "good-bye" after thirty-six hours on her oozing inhospitable shores and turn our faces toward the more southeasterly branch of the Athabasca. To this stream we were particularly tempted by having seen from a distance, an uncommonly fine pyramidal, snow-capped peak, which we later decided could be no other than Collie's Mt. Columbia. Habel, who is the only other white person to have entered this valley so far as is known, records it in a short paper in *Appalachia* as "Gamma," and has reproduced with it a most striking picture. To the northeast of Columbia, a long spur juts out from that mountain, which we called "Edward the Seventh." The aspect of this valley is totally different from that of the Chaba. It is about 25 miles in length; the stream at the junction of the two rivers seems to be about one half the size it is twelve miles nearer its source (bespeaking an underground passage), while muskegs and bottomless mountain streams make the travelling wearisome for at least fifteen miles. The last day's ride was one of uncommon impressiveness, and I quote from my diary. "August 1. To-day the hill-sides on both right and left, were wooded to the base with rich, deep-green spruces, mountain-torrents like snowy threads peeped from amidst the foliage and the tumbling waters sent forth a music not to be surpassed. The thud of the horses' feet, the rushing of the glaciated river, and all else was silent. Columbia, which Collie reckons as 12,000 feet, loomed in pyramidal majesty at the end of the valley, while high surrounding peaks came and went as we crept along among the lower hills.

Alberta, Wooley, Stutfield, Diadem, and other mountains figured in our names for the unknown summits, but our point of observation was far too low, to be at all certain of any of them. Caribou tracks grew more and more numerous; here and there teepee-poles on the open hill-sides bespoke the some-time presence of the Indian hunter. With no timber-work to impede our progress, we rapidly neared the base of Mt. Columbia. Our course lay across the wide shingle-flats, which then, at low water, was a garden of the pink *Epilobium* (*Chamaenerion latifolium*) and here and there silvery cascades fell hundreds of feet down sheer cliffs."

About two miles north of Mt. Columbia, a much longer stream comes in from the west; this we explored the next day, but as usual, the clouds came down and obliterated everything of interest. Apparently there is a high mountain at the far end, and a glacier flowing from it, seems worthy of study. Having in our ignorance, dragged our horses to the base of Mt. Columbia, we quickly saw we must drag them away again on account of feed, so retired to two small islands four miles down the river, where a limited amount of slough-grass was found on the river's left. Throughout the entire Athabasca region this problem of feed was almost as serious as the rivers themselves. After waiting three days, we never got any particularly fine pictures of that wonderful mountain, being at all times either surrounded by clouds, or else steeped in flat sunshine.

From the Columbia Branch, we now traced our way back to the main Athabasca, and from there to the Su Wapta, where we went in search of the Su Wapta Gorge. We found it within a mile of the mouth, and though the whole country is a country of gorges, this one is uncommonly fine. The walls are probably 150 feet high, the water makes a plunge of 50 feet at the upper end, then rushes seething and boiling through a deep elbow-shaped cut. Some one has hewn and thrown three trees across the narrowest part of the gorge (perhaps 20 feet wide), and cut on a near-by tree the facetious notice, "No toll charged on this bridge." We had intended our next stopping-place to be Diadem Creek, where we hoped to climb and locate the peaks named by Collie's party in that section. This was however impossible as there was not a sign of horse-feed, and we were compelled to move on up the river for two miles where we went into camp for a couple of days. Here we ascended a creek



to the fine glacier at its source, climbed a low mountain on the creek's left (about 9000 feet), and were undoubtedly in the midst of Wooley, Stutfield and Diadem, but which was which, it was hard to say with the limited description given by their sponsors. On August 16, we climbed Peak Wilcox (10,050 feet), and should have had an interesting view of the country we had just come from, and others to which we were bound—but for the usual clouds.

On August 17, we were camped at 7000 feet, just below Wilcox Pass. The morning opened with a regular, old-fashioned snow-storm, and the arrival at our tent-door of a total stranger before any one was awake. It was a queer sensation, looking out from one's sleeping-bag and seeing a man when there was no cause to think that such an object save our own guides were within a hundred miles of us. It proved to be Dr. Coleman's party, Dr. Coleman who had threaded the by-ways of so much of this country through which we had just been, and of whom we had spoken so often while in the mazes of the Athabasca sources.

It proved a pleasant meeting in spite of driving snows, and we parted—they for the Yellow-head Pass and we for the West Branch and the Brazeau country. "The West-Branch-of-the-North-Fork-of-the-Saskatchewan!" The most beautiful valley of all those we visited, and to go by such a name! May it some day receive its due; certain it is, it has not had it yet. It is essentially a valley of tumbling cascades and deep gorges, of muskegs and sloughs at its mouth, and shingle-flats at its source, with few good camp-grounds except *on* the pass. It runs in a straight line for about fifteen miles, when Mts. Alexandra, Gable and Lyell, with their snowy glaciers block the way. Here at right angles, another stream comes in direct from Thompson Pass and the Columbia ice-fields, about fifteen miles distant. To avoid the hard travelling which following the river involves, those who may follow in the future will find a hunter's shack about five miles east of the base of Gable Peak, on the river's left. Fifty yards to the east of it, they will strike into the mountain and there come upon a fairly good trail winding over the shoulder of the hill. No packs had ever been to the summit of the Thompson Pass before, and it took some careful work to get the loaded animals up and around the rock ridges which balked us every few yards. What a camp that was by the calm, deep-green lake, which lies at the foot of Outram's (Watchman's Peak!) Not

(36) *W. R. Lachan*

even the sign of the indefatigable Indian hunter was visible, only the little people of the wilderness, whose trails were everywhere. We drank from the clear, cold waters, and named it "Nashan-esen"—Stoney for "Wolverine-go-quick," our friend the hunter—Simpson.

We found the task of taking the horses to the summit of Thompson Pass a much easier one than we had first hoped. It is very steep in places, but the rock ridges, running transversely to the valley, made good shelves for footing. A good camp ground will be found a few hundred feet below the 6800 foot summit, on the lake shore. A low spur of Mt. Bryce, altitude about 9000 feet, gave us that which we had come so far to see, a view of the great Columbia ice-fields. Stretching for thirty miles to the north, the sight was one never to be forgotten! So cold, so still, so silent and haughty in their supreme, icy beauty, they well repaid for all the hardships of reaching them. Outram says they contain at least 200 square miles, and it can well be believed, from our point of vantage there seemed no limit to the billows and billows of ice. It was a grand marshaling of the monarchs. We stood in the heart of the highest which the Rocky range has to give to those who love the hills; and at last I was willing to admit, that in spite of the drudgery and fatigue, there is a fascination in reaching the "top." The nipping winds however, stiffened our enthusiasm for even that wonderful sight; so with a brisk run down the sliding scree, a plunge through the low scrub, a few tumbles over the rocks, we were back at Nashan-esen Camp, and a delicious supper of bacon and beans.

As we emerged from the wonderful valley, in a downpour of rain, we christened it "Nashan-esen," hoping that "West-Branch-of-the-North-Fork" might some day be forgotten.

September 5, saw us heading for Nigel Pass and the Brazeau country. The trail lies on the river's left, and at the summit, it will be found to wind among the rocks on the south side of the pass. When once found, the way proved perfectly easy going, having no doubt been a very old Indian trail.

On the far side of the pass, one branch of the Brazeau has its rise; this branch we followed for about 30 miles to the Brazeau Lake, keeping on the river's left for the first ten miles, when what there is of trail, crosses to the right side, and eventually surmounts a long, hilly shoulder and drops down to the main river.



Brazeau Lake is a beautiful, aquamarine sheet of water about six miles long, whose low surrounding mountains, on that sunny morning of our introduction to it, were exquisitely reflected in its mirrored surface. We found a well-marked trail on its eastern shore, and every indication that it had long been a favorite hunting-ground of the Indians. Pushing on by an old and ideal campground at the lower end of the lake, we camped that night at its northern extremity. Beyond the lake the valley extends for fully twelve miles. At its extreme limit rises a fine peak, which Coleman has called Mt. Brazeau, and though unclimbed, he reckons it at 11,000 feet or over. Tempted by an old but very good Indian trail, we followed it the next day, to the very limit of horse climbing, or close on to 9000 feet, and reached as dreary an alpine view as I ever saw. There was but one event to redeem and justify the expedition. The snow lay deep, even below tree-line, the icy winds whistled through the spruces, and shrieked past the bare rock ridges, and the low-hanging clouds obscured the higher and distant peaks. At last even the dying alpine flowers were left behind, and we crossed a rocky ridge to meet a band of mountain sheep. Surprised at our sudden coming, in the twinkling of an eye, they had scaled impossible cliffs covered with ice, and were gazing down upon us from 1000 feet above. The brave old ram his head accentuated with a pair of magnificent horns, never flinched from his post, or removed his eye from the enemy, till in our descent, the lower jutting rocks hid us from view. Returning up the Brazeau River, we took a side trip to Jonas Pass, the stream from which flows into the Brazeau about five miles from Nigel Pass. This pass was tried by a white man in 1893, Dr. Coleman, when finding his way to the Yellowhead Pass; and excepting one hunter, I have heard of no one using it since. In many ways it is an improvement on the Wilcox Pass by which to reach the Athabasca, avoiding much that is disagreeable on the Su Wapta. To us at this late season of the year, it had no "tourist" charms. The summit of the pass was burdened with two, three, and even four feet of snow, which with the hard work on the horses, the brilliant glare on unprotected eyes from the snow, and the cutting, driving wind lashing our faces, seemed endless. A fine, solitary black bear, out for any belated berries, he might find beneath the snow, was the

only bit of life to greet us on the great white silent stretch of loneliness.

September 21 saw us anxiously scanning the clouds and a rift in the hills to the south of us, from our camp on the Brazeau. We were to try still another new pass, the Cataract, and this also almost unknown except to Coleman. Being but 200 feet lower than "Jonas," or 7550 feet high, we had little to expect in the way of an open trail. It proved to be quite all that we could ask to get our horses through, and was even more tedious than "Jonas." The Indian trail through the forest is well marked, and had there been no snow, we might have found such a trail as that which goes over Nigel Pass; as it was, it was one long hard grind through fine, fluffy snow, which allowed the horses to sink almost to the rocks beneath, plunge forward, and sink again.

The south side of the pass is excessively tedious, as much of the way is avalanche-swept, and the apology for a trail is constantly blocked by fallen timbers. From the summit of the Pass to Pinto Lake is about fifteen miles. Here, owing to a pair of snow-blind eyes, we were forced to remain over a day; and as provisions were getting low, the guides reinforced by three of the strongest horses, pack-saddles, and ropes, crossed Pinto Pass to the junction of the North Fork and Nashan-esen Rivers, and returned that night with the food we had cached at that point. It was only a matter of thirty miles, but it was over a pass which even Dr. Coleman gave up attempting with horses after investigating it for that purpose.

We had traversed it the year before from the west to the east, but that was a different undertaking from this expedition, when the men were compelled to cut steps in the ice near the summit to enable the animals to get any foot-hold at all. Pinto Lake has long been a favorite fishing-ground for the Stoney Indians; they had just made a visitation to those waters, and as Indians always do, had cleaned out every fish that would rise to bait.

From Pinto Lake to the Kootenai Plains the trail follows Cataract Creek. It is a distance of about twenty-five miles to its junction with the main river, more or less uninteresting, and fire-swept from end to end. In the late fall the Saskatchewan is easy enough to ford where it divides into several channels near the base of the Sentinel Mountain. On the golden Kootenai Plains we rested and dallied among the Indians for a few days, then





GABLE AND ALEXANDRA GLACIERS IN NASHAN-ESEN VALLEY.



"MUMMERY" ON BAKER PASS.

hurried to the junction of Bear Creek and the Saskatchewan, crossed that river and ascended the North Fork in search of a valley, which Outram mentions on his map, "The-Valley-of-the-Lakes." The entrance to this valley is quite nine miles from the mouth of the North Fork. At low water, a ford may be easily made opposite the rift in the hills, but at high water, can only be reached by crossing below on the main stream and following the west shore of the river. The trip though short, was an arduous one, and almost devoid of real interest. We found a very ancient Indian trail, which needed much circumnavigating and cutting, to get even our now depleted packs through; the growth was very heavy and the way consequently dark and gloomy. By a brawling, noisy little river, we made the only camp where a sign of feed seemed possible for the tired horses, and that in the midst of fallen timbers on the avalanche-swept hill-sides. Outram describes this valley as he saw it from the summit of Mt. Lyell, 11,500 feet below him; we saw it at 8000 feet, where we climbed the following day, the sun beating down upon us, and the surrounding clouds so low that Lyell and everything else interesting was utterly obscured. The lovely lakes were only sloughs after all and the chief joy of the trip proved to be that we had been the first travellers to break the spell of silence in that lonely cleft of the hills. It had been many years since an Indian had been there, and the only other sign of life, was the blow of the axe from a solitary white hunter who had passed in the dead of winter. It was now October 5, and Howse and Baker Passes, our return route, quite unknown. Up the Middle Fork and to the Howse Pass, was like reading ancient history. One hundred and fifty years ago, the Indians from the Kootenai country took this portion of the trail on their journey to the Saskatchewan Plains (hence the name Kootenai Plains), to trade with Kline of Jasper House. As far as Howse Pass, it was delightful trailing; being but 4800 feet, we were on and over almost before we knew, and soon tumbling down beside the merry, chattering Blaeberry River. The instant Howse Pass is crossed, the character of the vegetation changes, and the trail becomes impeded with heavy fallen timber and an almost tropical undergrowth. Government surveyors had preceded us in the fall of 1907, and though the way was not a bed of roses, miles and miles of fatiguing work had been saved our men as far as the "Hunter's Cabin."

On Dr. Collie's map, one has but to follow a plain red line, which turns to the left of the "Cabin"; and the Baker Pass seems the easiest thing imaginable. In reality, the Blaeberry is followed for two miles further after passing the second cabin (we never saw the first one), when the trail turns sharply to the left and winds up a hill-side. This emerges shortly on a very bowldery river-bed, which is to be crossed at the traveller's discretion, when Baker Pass with its trials and tribulations begins. Again I quote from my diary. "Quite ignorant of distances by this time, our horses having had but little feed for the last three days, and having already come ten miles since morning, we with only our saddle-animals pushed ahead with the injunction to stop for camp at the first sign of grass." It was quite noon, and we hurried along. The trail lay over a steep moss-covered slope, so steep there was no thought of riding; so steep, that place after place the horses would spring one and two feet to reach a bench above; so steep and continuous, that they were forced to cling to the hill-sides while resting.

Pack and saddle-horses were all soon in a dripping perspiration. Occasionally a call would come from behind, "Is there any end to it?" There seemed none. The way was clear and well blazed, we must be on the trail and on we climbed—climbed till we reached timber-line at five o'clock. Not a mouthful of feed had we passed since leaving "Trapper's Cabin"—blueberry-bushes and moss, no more. Were we even on Baker Pass, and if so, why had we climbed to this high point? *We* could have camped anywhere, it was our starving horses to whom our thoughts turned.

W., who had pulled us out of so many straits, went off to investigate; the time seemed interminable as we watched the slowly descending sun, now almost at the horizon. Mt. Mummery looked down upon us in icy indifference from across the valley, we stood clinging to the half frozen hill-side, while the weary, hungry horses, with drooping heads, tried to retain a foothold on the slippery, sliding mud. No one had had a mouthful of food since breakfast (we had come fully twenty miles), darkness would soon be upon us, we were 7200 feet above sea-level, and under the circumstances, no one could honestly say he felt cheerful. Then W. returned with the good news that though he was not positive we were on the right track, he saw a slough in a valley below, with indications of feed, and he thought we might reach it before dark. We forgot hunger,

mud, cold, everything but that grass below; and as though the horses had understood, with us, plunged down a long, mossy gully, in a very few minutes dropping 1000 feet to a tiny stream which was flowing exactly as we wished it to flow. The sight of a horse's imprint cheered us; off came the packs, "no hobbles to-night, there is grass in plenty, and wherever we be, there are two days' rest for our faithful friends." The next day disclosed the fact that we had really struck the Baker Pass, were right on it in fact; but after studying the map and the hours of travel the day before we found the map made the distance about ten miles, while we had travelled twenty. Under the circumstances it seemed rather excusable, that for once we had felt a sensation of being lost. Climbing a shoulder of Mt. Habel the next day, we soon had our bearings, looked down into the "Gap" and upon an exquisite little lake poised high on a shoulder nearest the Yoho; to the north, Mummery and Forbes. With binoculars we could see the cairns on Collie and the Vice-President; and into the Beaver-tail Valley—our way home.







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